(b) The Government accords utmost priority to control the prices of all commodities in general and essential commodities in particular. By and large, the availability position of rice, wheat, atta, sugar and edible oils is fairly comfortable. Apart from taking certain long-term measures to increase the production of various commodities other measures taken by the Government to contain the rise in the prices include, open market sale operations of rice and wheat at below market prices by Food Corporation of India and supply of grains at subsidised prices to remote and inaccessible areas through the Revamped Public Distribution System. The import of edible oils excluding coconut oil, palm kernel oil, RBD Palmolein, RBD Palmstearin has been allowed under OGL at reduced customs duty of 30%. Besides, the STC and National Dairy Development Board have been authorised to import palmolein at a concessional customs duly of 20%. In the case of pulses, the import of pulses has been placed under OGL. The customs duty on import of pulses has been reduced from 10% to 5%. The Pulses, Edible Oilseeds and Edible Oils (Storage Control) Order, 1977 has been amended to exclude imported pulses from the purview of storage limits prescribed under the said order.

Statement

Percentage Variation in the Wholesale Price Indices of selected essential commodities during 1.4.95 and 30.6.95.

Commodity	Percentage Variation
Rice	+3.6
Wheat	−5.8
Pulses (Sub-group)	+5.4
Vegetable (Sub-group)	+33.4
Atta	−6.5
Sugar	+1.3
Edible Oils (Sub-group)	+0.1
(a) Vanaspati	+0.1
(b) Mustard Oil	−12.2
(c) Groundnut Oil	+2.1
(d) Coconut Oil	−0.6
Cotton Cloth (mills)	+1.0

Working Group for Beedi and Cigar Workers in Tamil Nadu

*103. SHRI V. RAJAN CHELLAPPA: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) what are the difficulties in the way for Government to form a working group to study the long term impact of legislation on Beedi and Cigar Workers of Tamil Nadu;

(b) whether it is a fact that various Ministries have authority to form a working group to study and review various policies and subjects; and

(c) if so, reasons for delay in forming a working group on this subject by the Ministry of Labour?

THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR (SHRI P.A. SANGMA): (a) to (c) There are mainly three Central Legislations relating to Beedi Workers.

The Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966 seeks to provide certain welfare measures and to regulate the conditions of work for the workers in beedi and cigar establishments. The State Governments are the implementing authorities under the Act. In Tamil Nadu, the Act, except for Section 3, has come into force w.e.f. 1.7.1968 while Section 3 came into force w.e.f. 1.9.1968.

The Beedi Workers Welfare Cess Act, 1976 provides for levy and collection of cess on menufactured beedies and crediting the same to the Beedi Workers Welfare Fund.

The Beedi Workers Welfare Fund Act, 1976 seeks to provide for the financing of measures to promote the welfare of persons engaged in beedi establishments. The Act provides for the constitution of

Tripartite Advisory Committees at the Central and State levels to advise the Government concerning matters arising out of the administration of the Act. The State Advisory Committee for Tamil Nadu was last constituted in May, 1993 for a period of three years.

The meetings of the Central and State Advisory Committees are held from time to time and their recommendations/suggestions are given due cosideration by the Government.

In the above circumstances, no proposal for constitution of a Working Group to study long term impact of legislation on beedi and cigar workers of Tamil Nadu or any other State is under consideration of the Labour Ministry. As Labour is a concurrrent subject, it is upto the State Government concerned, in case they are satisfied about its need to set up a Working Group to study the long term impact of legislations on the Beedi and Cigar Workers of Tamil Nadu.

Import of Newsprint

*105. SHRI MOHAMMED AFZAL *alias* MEEM AFZAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state the value and weight of Newsprint imported from foreign countries during March, 1995?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): The value and weight of newsprint imported during March, 1995 was Rs. 6102.11 lacs and 32207 tons respectively.

Unemployment of Labour Force

*107. SHRI BHUPINDER SINGH MANN: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) the number of unemployed, semi-employed, self-employed labour force in the country;

(b) the minimum wages for unskilled labour for the last three year, State-wise; and

(c) the measures being taken to reduce the list of unemployed person?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI P.A. SANGMA): (a) to (c) As per the estimate of the Planning Commission the total number of Unemployed persons as on April 1995 was of the order of 17.9 million. About 6 million were severely underemployed at the beginning of 1992-93.

As per the results of 43rd round survey (1987-88) of the National Sample Survey Organisation 53.6% of the total workers were estimated to be self-employed in terms of Usual Principal Status.

The Eights Five Year Plan envisages a strategy for achieving the goal of near full employment situation in the country as a whole by the year 2002. This goal is sought to be achieved by accelerating growth of productive employment opportunities on the basis of faster growth of employment-intensive sectors, sub-sectors and activities. The Plan also emphasises the need for revamping education and training system to introduce flexibility and responsiveness to labour market. In addition to this overall strategy resulting in employment opportunities for both the educated and uneducated unemployed through the normal growth process, the Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana launched on 2nd October, 1993 aims at creating self-employment opportunities specially for the educated unemployed youth in various states.

Under the Minimum wage Act, 1948, both the Central as well as State Governments are the appropriate Governments for fixation/revision of minimum rate of wages for scheduled employments falling under their respective jurisdictions. The minimum wages in the Central sphere as well as State sphere are revised from time to time. The statement indicating available information on the existing range of minimum wages for the unskilled categories of workers in different States/UTs is presented in the Statement.